



Legislative Update

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www.mnea.org

LEGISLATURE RETURNS FROM SPRING BREAK

The legislature reconvened on March 25 after a one-week Spring Break that began on March 14. A total of seven weeks now remains before the conclusion of session on May 17.

CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION

While the House has not taken up HCS/HB 581 (Roeber), the Senate now appears poised to take up SCS/SB 292 (Eigel) sometime next week. Both bills would allow charter schools to be sponsored by outside entities (other than the local school board) and operate in other parts of the state. The Association strongly opposes both SCS/SB 292 and HCS/HB 581.

IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY DONE SO, please call, write or use the link below to send an e-mail to urge your State Senator and State Representative to oppose the charter school expansion bills. The message can be edited, and your message will have **GREATER IMPACT** if you add your own comments.

Charter school policy is an unfamiliar issue for many legislators, particularly those who were recently elected, so the Association hopes that many of these advocacy messages will serve as the beginning of a dialog that helps legislators fully understand the Association's position and guidance.

<https://actionnetwork.org/letters/hcshb-581-charter-school-campaign-feb-2019?source=direct> link&

The Association's position statement on charter schools can be found here:

https://www.mnea.org/Uploads/Public/Documents/News/Positions/CharterSchools_PositionPaper_2017.pdf

CAPITOL ACTION DAYS

MNEA Capitol Action Days allow planned, face-to-face contact with legislators throughout the session. Capitol Action Days continue on April 3 when members from Governance Districts 9 & 11 are scheduled to visit the Capitol. Capitol Action Days will continue through the end of session in May.

PLEASE NOTE THE LOCATION CHANGE: MEET AT MNEA HEADQUARTERS AT 10 A.M. FOR THE BRIEFING!

For details and contact information, please visit:

<http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/CapitolActionDays.aspx>

BUDGET

The House finally approved the operating budget bills, HBs 1-13 (Smith) on March 28. The bills now move to the Senate for consideration. The budget is still built on a revenue estimate of 1.7% growth for this fiscal year and beyond. Revenue numbers to date are lagging far below this level, and there is considerable uncertainty about where revenues will stand at year's end.

As the Senate completes its work in the coming weeks, April income tax return information will better inform the legislature about the likely revenue result for this year. If revenues remain well below the original estimates, the Senate may need to make significant reductions in next year's budget. There may also be a shortfall of revenue that requires Governor Parson to withhold current year funding to keep the state from running out of cash. Final legislative approval of the budget bills must be completed by May 10.

The budget bills remove \$100M in general revenue funds from various parts of the budget and moved the funding to the State Road Fund to fund road and bridge work. Among the reductions made to support this transfer was a \$5M reduction to pupil transportation, reducing the Governor's proposed \$10M increase to \$5M.

HCS/HB 2 was approved by a mostly party-line vote of 106-40. In floor action on HB 2 for K-12 education, funding for safe school programs was reduced to \$300K, while \$260K was added to support early learning quality assurance, \$200K for a pilot program in the Booneville school district that uses integrated student support in collaboration with local communities to address barriers to student success and \$400K to support high school equivalency first time test takers.

HCS/HB 3 was approved by a mostly party-line vote of 108-43. The primary change on HB 3 for higher education was to change \$10M in general revenue funding for the new "Fast Track" workforce program to lottery funding.

INITIATIVE PETITION REQUIREMENTS

The House Elections and Elected Officials Committee heard three joint resolutions regarding the initiative petition process on March 27. The joint resolutions are HJR 7 (Sommer), HJR 25 (Deaton), and HJR 45 (Simmons). All of the House Joint Resolutions either increase the burden of signature gathering requirements or require initiative petitions to get a 2/3 supermajority vote for approval, or both. The Association opposes all of these measures that would make it harder and more costly for citizens to bring forward relevant policies through the initiative process.

The committee also heard several related bills:

HB 1055 (Simmons) requires a \$300 filing fee for a petition. The filing fee would be refunded if the measure is qualified for the ballot.

HB 290 (Sommer) imposes both a minimum \$500 non-refundable filing fee and a fee of forty cents per signature for the minimum required number of signatures if any signature circulators are paid to collect signatures. The Association is concerned that this creates a significant financial barrier to the initiative process and opposes the bill.

HB 496 (McGaugh) requires the Secretary of State to establish the format for initiative petition signature pages and provide the forms in electronic format. The Association supports the bill.

CLEAN MISSOURI AND ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT

The House General Laws Committee heard HJR 48 (Plocher) on March 25. As filed, the HJR makes relatively minor changes to the ethics reforms of Constitutional Amendment 1, also known as CLEAN Missouri. HJR 48 bans all lobbyist gifts by removing the allowance for \$5 lobbyist gifts and makes both House and Senate campaign contribution caps \$2000. The Association will follow this measure closely, as there is the possibility that this HJR could serve as a vehicle for other changes that could undermine the governmental ethics reforms of CLEAN Missouri.

STATE DEMOGRAPHER

The House gave first round approval to HB 973 (Trent) on March 27. The Senate gave final approval to SS/SB 213 (Hegeman), a similar bill, on March 28. The bills require the nonpartisan state demographer to establish the Redistricting Public Comment Portal for the purpose of publicly accepting any comments, records, documents, maps, data files, communication, or information of any kind relating to the redistricting process. Any such submissions shall be accompanied by a disclosure that indicates whether the person making the submission was responsible in whole or in part for the submission or another person contributed money that was intended to fund preparation of the submission and, if so, the disclosure shall additionally identify each such contributor. SB 213 also includes conflict of interest language regarding the state demographer.

PRIMARY ELECTIONS

The House gave first round approval to HCS/HBs 26 & HB 922 (Stacy) on March 27. The HCS version of the bill would require established political parties to create a closed primary system where only voters registered for that party would be able to vote in a primary election. The Association is concerned that this change may create barriers that reduce access to voting and participation in the political process by all eligible citizens.

WORKING AFTER RETIREMENT

The Senate Health and Pensions Committee heard HB 77 (Black) on March 27 and then voted after the hearing to approve the bill as a Consent Bill. If taken up as a Consent Bill, the bill would not be subject to amendment on the Senate floor. HB 77 would undo the effect of a change passed last session, SB 892, as it relates to community college teachers. SB 892 applies when a PSRS retiree is doing work in a school (or other PSRS employer) in a position that does not require a DESE certificate. For that work, there is no limit on hours, but the retiree can earn no more than \$15,000 during the school year (60% of the \$25,000 state minimum teachers' salary).

An unintended effect of SB 892 was to also change the working after retirement (WAR) limit for community college teachers who are PSRS retirees. Community colleges are PSRS employers, but community college teachers are not required by law to have a DESE certificate, so the new law also applies to their teaching work. HB 77 would reverse this change, leaving PSRS retirees employed as community college teachers once again under the same 550 hour limit per school year that still applies when PSRS retirees teach in school districts. The Association supports the bill to correct this unintended change.

TURNAROUND SCHOOLS BILL

The House gave first round approval to HCS/HB 604 (Henderson) on March 25. The bill would authorize appropriations to fund consultants that would help support instructional improvements in a set of schools identified for improvement. This program could overlap with DESE identification of schools in need of comprehensive or targeted intervention as required under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The bill had been blocked when taken up initially on March 13 by a purposefully controversial amendment regarding administrator salaries, but the amendment was withdrawn on March 25 before the bill was approved.

RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The House gave final approval to HB 267 (Baker) on March 25 by a vote of 95-52. The bill states that school districts may offer elective social studies courses on the Bible. Regardless of any provision of state law, public school instruction about religion must adhere to U.S. Supreme Court case law regarding the separation of church and state under the First Amendment. The Association believes that schools should teach the rights and responsibilities associated with the freedom of religion, the religious heritage and diversity of the United States, respect for the beliefs of others and the historical and cultural influences of various world religions.

TEACHER EXTERNSHIPS

The House gave first round approval (Perfection vote) to HCS#2/HB 462 (Shields) on March 27. The bill would increase opportunities for teacher externships. The HCS#2 version of the bill removes the tax credit for business costs incurred. The bill does give teachers credit for externships on teacher salary schedules. The Association believes the bill would support and respect teacher participation in business externships that can have a beneficial impact for students.

INTERNET SAFETY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The House gave final approval to HCS/HB 169 (Gannon) on March 27. The bill requires public schools to teach students appropriate online behavior. The Association believes school districts should have policies in place to address this important subject.

MINIMUM WAGE

The House gave final approval to HCS/HB 763 (Remole) to exempt private schools from certain state minimum wage law requirements. The HCS expanded the exemption from religious schools to all private schools. Public employers, including public schools, are already exempt from this set of minimum wage requirements.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard three bills on March 26:

SB 445 (Arthur) to allow school districts and charter schools to receive state school funding under the foundation formula for high school students who are taking competency-based credits. The Association supports this recommendation from DESE's Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force in 2013.

SB 475 (Cunningham) to require DESE to make a school funding formula adjustment to compensate for loss of school revenues due to the 2018 legislation reducing the financial institutions tax (FIT). The Association supports this effort to offset the financial impact to schools of the reduction in financial institutions tax revenues.

SB 478 (Holsman) to exempt school districts from the required number of days school districts are required to make up for days lost due to inclement weather for the 2018-2019 school year.

In addition to hearing bills, the committee approved SB 407 (Wallingford). The bill would include students in the attendance calculation for the school funding formula if they attend an early childhood education program that is under contract with a district or charter school and that meets standards established by the State Board of Education.

HOUSE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The committee heard two bills on March 26:

HB 1010 (Ross) to establish a pilot program for agricultural education programs in elementary schools.

HB 1139 (Baker) to revise home schooling law. The bill requires a local prosecuting attorney to have reasonable suspicion of a violation of law to investigate home school records. The bill also requires public schools to keep information about home school parents and students confidential.

In addition to hearing bills on March 26, the committee approved HCS/HB 857 (Deaton) to allow home school students to participate in activities sponsored by a statewide activity association for the public-school district where they reside. The Association asks that decisions regarding student participation in activities continue to be made by the member schools that make up and operate these voluntary associations.

The committee met again on March 27 to hear the following "committee" bills and reconvened on March 28 and voted to approve both bills:

HCB 6 (Roeber) contains the language of HB 363 (Roeber) to place additional limitations on use of public funds and resources by local officials and employees in support of candidates or ballot measures. HCS/HCB 6 revises language regarding testimony of local officials and employees before the legislature. HCB 6 also contains HB 361 (Roeber) to change school board terms to four years and change the school board election date to November general elections in even numbered years. The Association opposes the bill.

HCB 7 (Roeber) would enact numerous restrictions on school superintendent contracts. The HCS only limits superintendent contract terms in the case of termination for cause.

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY

The committee postponed the scheduled hearing for HB 132 (Carter) on March 26. The committee heard a similar bill, HB 309 (Walker), prior to spring break. Both bills require certain high poverty public schools to offer "breakfast after the bell." The Association supports this effort to ensure that all students are in school and ready to learn.

The committee also approved HCS/HB 464 (Kelley) on March 26. The bill would revise existing laws regarding reading intervention programs and establish a new reading intervention program for students in kindergarten to fourth grade. The HCS version makes a number of changes to the bill that will allow schools and districts to continue to use existing reading instruction and interventions that have proven successful in helping students read. The Association believes that key decisions about assessment, placement, additional instruction and advancement should remain at the local level with district, employee, parent and student input.

HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard two bills on March 25:

HB 436 (Chipman) to specify that public institutions of higher education shall not require their students to pay fees related to health care if they show proof of health insurance coverage.

HB 1099 (Griesheimer) to allow institutions of higher education to enter into long-term concession agreements.

SENATE GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE

The committee heard SB 465 (Burlison) on March 26. The bill would prohibit DESE from limiting the reimbursement rate to school districts for early childhood special education program facility lease agreements.

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